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ABSTRACT

This publication presents guidelines for parents and educators in making appropriate decisions about participation in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MACS) tests for students with disabilities, and it describes commonly used test accommodations. State law requires the participation in MCAS of all students who are educated with Massachusetts public funds. During its annual meeting each disabled student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or "504" Team will determine and document how each student will participate in the MCAS for each subject. The document contains specific guidelines to determine what is appropriate for the student. The use of the MCAS alternate assessment, designed for a very small number of students unable to take the MCAS, and commonly used testing accommodations are described. During 2003, the Massachusetts Department of Education will issue guidelines for the appropriate testing of students of limited English proficiency (LEP). Appendixes contain information on reading aloud as an accommodation and acknowledgments. (SLD)

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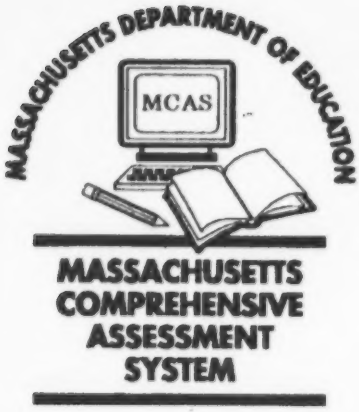

Spring 2003 Update

Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS

Including Test Accommodations and Alternate Assessment

A Guide for Educators and Parents

TM035011

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Massachusetts Department of Education

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The purpose of this document is to provide educators and parents with guidelines for participation by students with disabilities in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), the state's student testing program.

Commissioner's Foreword

January 2003

Dear Colleagues:

In preparation for the spring 2003 MCAS tests, I am pleased to provide an updated version of the publication, *Requirements for the Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS*. This publication presents guidelines to educators and parents in making appropriate MCAS participation decisions for students with disabilities and describes commonly-used test accommodations.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind IEP Teams to identify **accommodations** for each student carefully, and to select only those that are believed to be essential in providing him or her access to MCAS tests. As a reminder, test accommodations may only be identified by the IEP Team, rather than by any individual, and may be administered only after the parent signs the IEP. Accommodations that *are* identified for each student must be those that are generally consistent with those used during routine instruction and assessment in that content area. I am particularly concerned that *non-standard accommodations*, such as reading aloud the ELA Language and Literature tests to a student, be used only when absolutely necessary and only when a student already receives this accommodation during his or her instruction.

I applaud your efforts to provide students with disabilities an educational program based on the Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks,* and commend you for the work you do to educate all students in the Commonwealth.

If you need additional information, please contact my staff in the Student Assessment Services unit by phone at (781) 338-3625 or by email at mcas@doe.mass.edu.

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Overview of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) 1
- A. Background 1
- B 2003 MCAS Test Schedule 2
- C. High School Competency Determination 2
- D. Reporting Results of Students Who Attend Out of District Placements 2

II. Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS 3
- A. Definition of a Student with a Disability 3
- B. Who Must Participate in MCAS? 3
- C. Determining How Students with Disabilities will Participate in MCAS 3
- D. Determining How Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students with Disabilities Will Participate in MCAS 4
- E. Communicating Resource and Other Testing Needs to the Prinicpal 4
- F. MCAS Participation Guidelines 5
- G. Unique Circumstances in Which a Student May Be Considered for an Alternate Assessment 7

III. MCAS Test Accommodations 8
- A. Students Eligible for Test Accommodations 8
- B. Definition and Purpose of Test Accommodations 8
- C. Test Accommodations Policy 8
- D. Definition of Standard Accommodations 9
- E. Definition of Non-Standard Accommodations 9
- F. Reporting Results of MCAS Tests Taken With Accommodations 10
- G. Standard Accommodations for MCAS Tests 11
- H. Non-Standard Accommodations for MCAS Tests 14

IV. MCAS Alternate Assessment 16
- A. Overview 16
- B. Participation Guidelines 16
- C. Schedule for Conducting Annual Alternate Assessments 17
- D. Portfolio Binders and Mailing Materials 17
- E. Scoring and Reporting Results of Alternate Assessments 17
- F. Meeting the State's Graduation Requirement Through Alternate Assessment 18

V. Planning and Preparation for MCAS Testing 19
- A. Preparing Students with Disabilities for MCAS 19
- B. Parent's Role 19
- C. Available Resources 20

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Advisory on Test Accommodations #17 and #26-- Reading MCAS Tests Aloud to a Small Group of Students

Appendix B: Acknowledgments

I. Overview of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)

A. Background

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is the Commonwealth's statewide assessment program for students educated with public funds. MCAS measures the performance of students, schools, and districts on the academic learning standards contained in the Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks*, fulfilling the requirement of the *Education Reform Law of 1993*. Students are tested in English language arts, mathematics, science and technology/engineering, and history and social science at selected grade levels (see schedule on the following page). Students will not be tested in history and social science in spring 2003.

The primary purposes of MCAS are

- to measure the performance of individual students, schools, and districts based on the state standards outlined in the *Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks*
- to raise student achievement
- to improve classroom instruction
- to determine competency in English language arts and mathematics as one condition for awarding a high school diploma

B. 2003 MCAS Test Schedule

In 2003 students will be tested in the grades and subjects shown in Table 1. Students with disabilities in **ungraded** programs must take assessments in the same subjects as those taken by their non-disabled peers at the equivalent chronological age.

Table 1. Grades and Subjects Tested by MCAS in 2003

Grade	Subject
3	Reading
4	English Language Arts Mathematics
5	Science and Technology/Engineering
6	Mathematics
7	English Language Arts
8	Mathematics Science and Technology/Engineering
9	Question Tryouts in Biology, Chemistry, Introductory Physics, and Technology/Engineering[1]
10	English Language Arts Mathematics Question Tryouts in Biology, Chemistry, Introductory Physics, and Technology/Engineering[2]

C. High School Competency Determination

Beginning with the graduating class of 2003, students must pass the grade 10 MCAS tests in English language arts and mathematics at a scaled score of 220 or higher and complete all local school district requirements in order to be eligible for a high school diploma. Students who fail one or more test(s) will be given multiple opportunities to retake the test(s) they did not pass.

(Note: Meeting the state's graduation requirement through the MCAS Alternate Assessment is discussed on page 18.)

D. Reporting MCAS Results of Students Who Attend Out of District Placements

Test scores of students attending approved private special education schools, educational collaboratives, sole source of care, and other out of district special education placements will be reported to both the school or program where the student took the test(s), and to the student's sending school district. For reporting purposes, results will be counted in the results of the student's sending district.

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1 Students requiring an **alternate assessment** in Science and Technology/Engineering at this grade level are **not** required to take an alternate assessment in these subjects in 2003, nor to participate in Question Tryouts.

2 Same as footnote 1 above

II. Participation of Students with Disabilities in MCAS

A. Definition of a Student with a Disability

For purposes of MCAS, a student with a disability is a student who has either an Individualized Education Program (IEP) provided under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* or a plan provided under *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.*

B. Who Must Participate in MCAS?

The Massachusetts *Education Reform Law* mandates that ***all*** students with disabilities who are educated with Massachusetts public funds participate in MCAS, including

- students enrolled in public schools
- students enrolled in charter schools
- students enrolled in educational collaboratives
- students enrolled in approved private special education schools within and outside Massachusetts
- students receiving educational services in institutional settings
- students enrolled in special education "sole source of care" placements
- students in the custody of the Department of Social Services
- students in the custody of the Department of Youth Services

No student is permitted to take the standard MCAS test for a grade level unmatched to the student's chronological age; for example, administering a grade 4 test to a student in grade 8, or to a student who is the chronological age of a grade 8 student. The only exception to this policy is for students in grades 11 and 12 (or beyond) who have not passed the MCAS grade 10 test and are taking the MCAS retests.

C. Determining How Students with Disabilities Will Participate in MCAS

During its annual meeting, the student's IEP or 504 Team will determine how the individual student will participate in MCAS tests in each subject scheduled for assessment in the coming year. This information **must** be documented in the student's IEP and should also be documented in the student's 504 plan. Guidelines to assist teams in making assessment participation decisions for individual students appear on pages 5-7.

D. Determining How Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students with Disabilities Will Participate in MCAS

NEW! To meet new state and federal requirements, the Department is currently developing guidelines for assessing LEP students in each content area. The English language proficiency of all LEP students must also be assessed annually in reading, writing, speaking, and listening beginning in spring 2003. Additional information will be sent to school districts in late winter 2003 regarding the participation of LEP students in MCAS and in English proficiency assessments.

E. Communicating Resource and Other Testing Needs to the Principal

Prior to MCAS testing, the IEP or 504 Team chairperson will inform the school principal of all students who will require test accommodations and those accommodation(s) that will be needed. This information will enable the principal to make appropriate arrangements for testing these students.

F. MCAS Participation Guidelines

These guidelines are provided to guide IEP Teams and 504 teams through the process of deciding how each student with a disability should participate in MCAS. The student's team should begin by asking the following questions:

- Can the student take the standard MCAS test under routine conditions?
- Can the student take the standard MCAS test with accommodations? If so, which accommodations are necessary and appropriate for the student?
- Does the student require an alternate assessment? (Alternate assessments are intended for a very small number of students with significant disabilities who are unable to take MCAS tests.)

Characteristics of Student's Instructional Program and Local Assessment	Recommended Participation in MCAS

The student must be engaged in an instructional program guided by the Massachusetts *Curriculum Framework* learning standards. A separate decision must be made in <u>each</u> subject scheduled for testing.

OPTION 1

If the student is	*Then*
a) working on learning standards at or near grade-level expectations; and is b) generally able to take a paper-and-pencil test either under routine conditions, or with one or more test accommodations	The student should take the **standard MCAS test**, either under routine conditions (without accommodations) or with accommodations that are consistent with the instructional accommodation(s) used in the student's educational program.

OPTION 2

If the student is	*Then*
a) working on learning standards that have been modified and are below grade-level expectations due to the nature of the student's disability(ies); and is b) generally able to take a paper-and-pencil test under routine conditions, or with one or more test accommodations	The student should take the **standard MCAS test**, either under routine conditions or with accommodation(s) that are consistent with the instructional accommodation(s) used in the student's educational program.

OPTION 3

If the student is	*Then*
a) working on learning standards at, near, or below grade-level expectations and is b) generally able to take a paper-and-pencil test under routine conditions, or with one or more test accommodation(s); but is c) presented with **unique and significant challenges** in demonstrating his/her knowledge and skills on a test of this format and duration	Generally, the student should take the **standard MCAS test**, with accommodations if necessary. *However* The Team may recommend the **MCAS Alternate Assessment** for the student when the nature and complexity of the student's disability prevents him/her from demonstrating his/her knowledge and skills on the test. (Examples of *unique circumstances* in which a student in this category may require an alternate assessment are provided on Page 7.)

OPTION 4

If the student is	*Then*
a) working on learning standards that have been substantially modified due to the nature and severity of the student's disability; and b) receiving intensive, individualized instruction necessary for the student to acquire and generalize knowledge, and/or demonstrate skills; and is c) generally **unable** to demonstrate knowledge on a paper-and-pencil test, even with accommodations	The student should take the **MCAS Alternate Assessment** in this subject. (Participation in alternate assessment is intended for a very small number of students with significant disabilities.)

G. Unique Circumstances in Which a Student May Be Considered for an Alternate Assessment

The nature and complexity of a student's disability may present significant barriers or challenges to standardized testing, even when the student is working on learning standards at or near grade level expectations (see Option 3 on the previous page). In these and similar circumstances, the IEP or 504 team may determine that it is necessary for the student to take an alternate assessment in one or more subjects. The following examples are intended to expand the team's understanding of the appropriate use of alternate assessments and are not meant to be exhaustive.

- A student who, as a consequence of either severe emotional impairments or pervasive developmental or other disability(ies) is unable to maintain sufficient concentration to participate in standard testing, even with test accommodations

- A student with multiple physical disabilities, severe health-related disabilities, severe cerebral palsy or other disability for whom the demands of a prolonged test administration would present a significant challenge

- A student with a significant motor, communication, or other disability who would require more time than is reasonable or available for testing, even with the allowance of extended time

III. MCAS Test Accommodations

A. Students Eligible for Test Accommodations

Students with disabilities who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or who are provided instructional accommodations under a Section 504 plan are eligible to use accommodations when taking MCAS tests.

NEW! While the vast majority of students eligible for accommodations are those with an IEP or served under a 504 plan, Title II of the *Americans with Disabilities Act* allows for students with disabilities who are **not** served under either plan to request that accommodations be considered. To determine such a student's eligibility for test accommodations, a request for accommodations with supporting documentation of a disability must be provided to the principal who will then consult, as needed, with the local administrator of special education. The **principal** may then authorize its provision.

B. Definition and Purpose of Test Accommodations

Test accommodations are changes in the way a test is administered, or the way in which a student with a disability responds to test questions. Accommodations are intended to provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and achievement on MCAS tests.

IEP Teams are instructed to identify which accommodations, if any, are necessary in order for the student to take the standard MCAS tests. Test accommodations must be generally consistent with those used during routine classroom instruction. The right to receive accommodations on statewide tests is guaranteed to a child with a disability under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA-97).

C. Test Accommodations Policy

Students with disabilities must be provided test accommodations when their IEP or 504 team has determined their necessity on a particular test. Department policy allows the use of both "standard" and "non-standard" accommodations on MCAS tests under the conditions outlined on the following pages.

Test accommodations should only be provided to students with disabilities when they meet two important criteria, as determined by their IEP or 504 teams:

1) Students for whom this accommodation is already provided during routine instruction and assessment in this subject (both before and after the test is administered).

   and

2) Students for whom no other means of access exists that allows them to participate in MCAS tests.

D. Definition of Standard Accommodations

Standard accommodations are changes in the routine conditions under which students take MCAS tests, and involve changes in

- **Timing or scheduling of the test**; for example, administration of the test in short intervals or at a time of day that takes into account the student's medical needs
- **Test setting**; for example, administration of the test individually or in a small group setting
- **Test presentation**; for example, test questions presented in large-print or Braille
- **How the student responds to test questions**; for example, the student dictates his or her responses to the test administrator

A list of standard test accommodations can be found on pages 11–13.

Untimed Test Sessions
MCAS tests are untimed for all students. Students on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 plans who require additional time to complete their tests may take until the end of the school day to complete a single test session. These students may find it necessary to take only one test session per day -- except the *ELA Composition* for which the draft and final versions must be completed in a single school day.

E. Definition of Non-Standard Accommodations

Non-standard accommodations are modifications in the way the test is presented or in the way a student responds to test questions that may alter what the test measures. Teams should exercise caution in considering whether a student requires a non-standard accommodation in order to access the test. Reliance on test accommodations should never replace appropriate and rigorous instruction in the subject being tested.

Non-standard accommodations may **not**

- simplify, paraphrase, explain, or eliminate any test item, prompt, or multiple-choice option
- provide verbal or other clues or suggestions that hint at or give away the correct response to the student

As with standard test accommodations, only the student's IEP Team may recommend that a student receive a non-standard accommodation. This recommendation appears in the student's IEP and must be approved (signed) by the parent before it can be administered. A list of non-standard accommodations and a description of the circumstances in which they should be considered appears on pages 14–15.

F. Reporting Results of MCAS Tests Taken with Accommodations

Results of MCAS tests taken with either standard or non-standard accommodations will be included in the results of students who took these tests without accommodations.

Students who pass the grade 10 MCAS tests in *English Language Arts* and *Mathematics* using either standard and/or non-standard accommodations during test administration and meet all local graduation requirements will earn a Competency Determination and will be eligible for a Massachusetts high school diploma.

For reporting purposes, the Department will maintain a record of the number of students in each school and district taking MCAS tests with non-standard accommodations. **The Department intends to closely monitor schools and districts to ensure the proper use of non-standard accommodations.**

G. Standard Accommodations for MCAS Tests

Following is a list of standard test accommodations commonly used by students with disabilities on MCAS tests. This is not an exhaustive list.

Changes in timing or scheduling of the test

1. Administer test in short periods with frequent breaks
2. Administer test at a time of day that takes into account the student's medical or learning needs

Changes in test setting

3. Administer test in a small group setting (i.e., 3-5 students)
4. Administer test in a room other than the one used by the rest of the class
5. Administer test to the student individually using routine administration procedures
6. Administer test with the student seated at the front or in a specified area of the room (partitioned or enclosed area)
7. Administer test in a carrel
8. Administer test with the student wearing noise buffers (after directions have been given using routine administration procedures)
9. Administer test with a test administrator familiar to the student

Changes in test presentation

10. Administer test using magnifying equipment or enlargement devices
11. Test administrator reads and/or clarifies (or sign-language interprets) general administration **instructions** and **test directions** only
12. Administer large-print edition of the test **(Test administrator must transcribe answers verbatim into a standard student *Answer Booklet*.)**
13. Administer Braille edition of the test. **(Test administrator must transcribe answers verbatim into a standard student *Answer Booklet*.)**
14. Allow the student to use a place marker

NEW! 15. Test administrator assists the student in tracking and/or sequencing of test items (e.g., moving from one test question to the next; or **redirecting the student's attention to the test.)**

16. Administer the test using the student's amplification equipment

17. Test administrator reads the *ELA Composition* writing prompt, *Mathematics, Science and Technology/Engineering*, and/or *History and Social Science* Test(s) to the student. Readers must read test items/questions and text word-for-word exactly as written. Readers may not clarify, elaborate, or provide assistance to the student regarding the meaning of words, intent of test questions, or responses to test items.

    (**Note:** Reading the *ELA Language and Literature* Test or *Grade 3 Reading Test* to a student is non-standard accommodation #26.)

    Important Test Administration Information:
    When accommodation #17 is used, a test administrator may read the test to a small group of students by following the procedures outlined in Appendix A.

18. Test administrator uses sign-language to interpret the *ELA Composition* writing prompt, *Mathematics, Science and Technology/Engineering,* and/or *History and Social Science Test(s)* to a student who is deaf or hard of hearing. Interpreters must interpret test items and prompts without clarifying, elaborating, or providing assistance regarding the meaning of words, intent of test questions, or responses to test items.

    (**Note:** Sign-language interpreting the *ELA Language and Literature Test* or *Grade 3 Reading Test* for a student is non-standard accommodation #27.)

Changes in how the student responds to test questions

19. Answers dictated to a scribe. The scribe may not edit or alter student responses in any way, and must record word-for-word exactly what the student has dictated into the student's *Answer Booklet*. Scribes should request clarification from the student regarding the use of punctuation, capitalization, and the spelling of key words, and must allow the student to review and edit what the scribe has written.

    (**Note:** Dictating the *ELA Composition* to a scribe is non-standard accommodation #28.)

20. Use of template or graphic organizer to generate a draft *ELA Composition* or open-response. The student (or test administrator) must transcribe the final draft into the student's *Answer Booklet*.

21. Answers recorded using audiotape to be later transcribed into the student's *Answer Booklet* either by the student or test administrator

    (**Note**: Recording the *ELA Composition* on audiotape and transcribing the student's responses into the *Answer Booklet* by the test administrator is non-standard accommodation #28.)

22. Test administrator monitors correct placement of student responses in the student's *Answer Booklet*.

23. Answers recorded or typed by the student using **assistive technology** (e.g., word processor, electronic speech-to-text conversion, or other communication device or system). The spell-check and grammar-checking device must be turned off/disabled for the *ELA Composition*.

    (**Note:** Using an electronic speech-to-text conversion device, grammar- or spell-checking device, or word prediction software for the *ELA Composition* is non-standard accommodation #30.)

Important Test Administration Information:
If a word processor or typewriter is used for the *ELA Composition* or in response to an open-response question, a printout may be submitted provided that the directions below are followed:

a) Each page of the printout (final copy) must show the following:

- the student's name
- the district and school name
- the student's state-assigned identification number (SASID)
- the grade
- the subject being tested and the number of the question for which the student response is being submitted.

b) All printout pages must be placed inside the student's standard *Answer Booklet* and submitted in the MCAS *Typed Responses Envelope*. Do NOT use paper clips, rubber bands, binder clips, staples, or tape to attach pages.

24. Answers recorded by the student directly in the *Student Test Booklet* instead of the *Answer Booklet*, and copied word-for-word into the *Answer Booklet* by the test administrator

(**Note:** Answers **must** be copied into the *Answer Booklet* or the student will not receive credit for his or her response.)

25. Other standard accommodation selected by the IEP or 504 team

Note: The principal or designee should notify (and may consult with) the Department when standard accommodations not on the above list are being considered for a student. Please call (781) 338-3625, e-mail mcas@doe.mass.edu, or fax (781) 338-3630. Principals must mark code #25 in the "To Be Completed by Principal or Designee" section of the *Answer Booklet* cover.

H. Non-Standard Accommodations for MCAS Tests

Students may use one or more of the following non-standard MCAS test accommodations when they are consistent with accommodations provided to the student during routine instruction and assessment; and when they are determined by the student's IEP or 504 Team to be absolutely necessary in order for the student to participate in MCAS testing:

26. Reading aloud the *ELA Language and Literature* test or the *Grade 3 Reading Test* to a student. Readers must read test items/questions and reading passages to the student word for word exactly as written. Readers may not clarify, elaborate, or provide assistance to the student regarding the meaning of words, intent of test questions, or responses to test items/questions. (See **Note** below #27.)

27. Interpreting through American Sign Language or other system of interpretation the *ELA Language and Literature* Test or the *Grade 3 Reading Test* to a student who is deaf. Interpreters must interpret test items and prompts without clarifying, elaborating, or providing assistance to the student regarding the meaning of words, intent of test questions, or responses to test items.

    (Note: Use of non-standard accommodations #26 and #27 should be considered when both of the following conditions apply:

    - The student has a specific impairment that greatly limits or prevents her or his ability to decode text, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so

      and

    - The student has access to printed materials only through a reader or sign-language interpreter, or is provided with text on audiotape or another electronic format for routine instruction.

28. Allowing a student to dictate to a scribe, record on audiotape (for transcription by a test administrator), or use an electronic "speech-to-text" conversion device for the *ELA Composition*. When the student dictates to a scribe, the scribe may not edit or alter student responses in any way, and must record word-for-word exactly what the student has dictated. Scribes should request clarification from the student regarding the use of punctuation, capitalization, and the spelling of key words, and must allow the student to review and edit what the scribe has written.

    (Note: Use of non-standard accommodation #28 should be considered when **either** of the following conditions applies:

    - The student dictates virtually all written compositions to a scribe; or records these on audiotape for transcription by an adult; or routinely uses an electronic "speech to text" conversion device to generate written compositions during routine instruction.

      or

    - The student does not have sufficient manual dexterity at the time of testing to produce legible written work.

29. Allowing a student to use a calculator, number chart, arithmetic table, manipulatives, or abacus on non-calculator sections of the *Mathematics Test*

(**Note:** Use of non-standard accommodation #29 should be considered when **both** of the following conditions apply:

- The student has a specific impairment that greatly limits or prevents her or his ability to calculate mathematically, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so

and

- The student has access to mathematical calculation only through the use of a calculator, number chart, arithmetic table, manipulatives, or abacus, which the student uses for routine instruction.)

30. Allowing a student to use a spell- or grammar-checking device when using a word processor for the *ELA Composition*; or word prediction software provided that "predict-ahead" and "predict-on-line" functions are turned off.

(**Note:** Use of non-standard accommodation #30 should be considered when **both** of the following conditions apply:

- The student has a specific impairment that greatly limits or prevents her or his ability to spell, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so.

and

- The student can produce written work only through use of a spell-or grammar-checking device or word prediction software which the student uses during routine instruction.

31. Other non-standard accommodation selected by the IEP or 504 Team

(**Note**: The principal or designee should notify (and may consult with) the Department when non-standard accommodations not on the above list are being considered for a student. Please call (781) 338-3625, e-mail mcas@doe.mass.edu, or fax (781) 338-3630. Principals must mark code #31 in the "To Be Completed by Principal or Designee" section of the student's *Answer Booklet* cover.

NEW! MCAS test materials are now available for students using the **"Kurzweil 3000"** electronic text reader software. Please contact the Department to request test materials for grade 10 English language arts and mathematics tests and retests only.

IV. MCAS Alternate Assessment

A. Overview

The MCAS Alternate Assessment consists of a portfolio of materials that measures a student's knowledge of the key concepts and skills outlined in the learning standards of the Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks*. Evidence may include work samples, instructional data on the student's performance, videotapes, and other supporting information linked to instruction in the subject being assessed. A student's portfolio shows evidence of performance in three *strands* in each content area being assessed.

Students designated for participation in MCAS Alternate Assessments by their IEP or 504 teams must participate in this assessment at every grade and in each subject for which the standard MCAS test is required. For each student scheduled to take an alternate assessment in one or more subjects, a portfolio must be developed over the course of the school year by the student, the student's teacher, and other adults who work with the student. The portfolio, including all necessary forms found in the *2003 Educator's Manual for MCAS Alternate Assessment,* must be submitted to the Department postmarked no later than **Friday, May 9, 2003**, in a three-ring binder provided for this purpose.

To assist teachers in providing students with significant disabilities access to the general curriculum, the Department has developed a *Resource Guide to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Students with Significant Disabilities* in four subjects (English language arts, mathematics, science, technology/engineering, and history and social science). The Department is currently revising the resource guide in history and social science to reflect the *Curriculum Framework* approved in fall 2002.

For further information on the MCAS Alternate Assessment, including an online copy of the *2003 Educator's Manual for MCAS Alternate Assessment* and the *Resource Guide to the Curriculum Frameworks for MCAS Alternate Assessment,* please consult the Department's alternate assessment web page at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt. Teachers who are conducting alternate assessments may request a printed copy of the *2003 Educator's Manual for the MCAS Alternate Assessment* by e-mailing jgoldsmith@measuredprogress.org or by calling 1-800-431-8901, extension 2239.

The Department will monitor the use of alternate assessments statewide to ensure that they are being used appropriately and that decisions regarding participation in this assessment are made in accordance with the law.

B. Participation Guidelines

The MCAS Alternate Assessment is intended for a very small number of students with significant disabilities who, due to the nature and complexity of their disabilities, are unable to participate in the standard paper-and-pencil MCAS tests, even with accommodations. IEP Teams must determine annually which students will take alternate assessments in each subject based on their consideration of participation guidelines found on pages 5-7.

C. Schedule for Conducting Annual Alternate Assessments

Students designated by their IEP or 504 Team for MCAS Alternate Assessments must be assessed in the same subjects for which their grade-level peers are scheduled to take standard MCAS tests. Students with disabilities in **ungraded** programs who are designated for alternate assessments must take these assessments in the same subjects as those taken by their non-disabled peers at the equivalent chronological age. The assessment schedule by subject and grade is provided on page 2.

D. Portfolio Binders and Mailing Materials

Based on information provided by each school in the *MCAS Enrollment Survey*, an appropriate number of binders, data forms, and pre-paid mailing materials will be sent to principals in late winter 2003.

E. Scoring and Reporting Results of Alternate Assessments

Alternate assessment portfolios will be scored using a scoring rubric, which can be found in the *2003 Educator's Manual for MCAS Alternate Assessment*. Massachusetts educators who conduct alternate assessments will be recruited to score student portfolios during a series of week-long summer scoring institutes in July. Applications for these institutes will be sent to schools in the spring.

Each portfolio strand will be evaluated using the *Rubric for Scoring Portfolio Strands*, based on the following criteria:

- the completeness of materials submitted
- the level of complexity at which the student addresses the *Curriculum Framework* learning standards
- the accuracy of the student's responses and performance
- the independence demonstrated by the student in performing each task or activity
- the number of instructional approaches used by the student to demonstrate knowledge and skills
- the frequency of reflection, self-correction, and self-evaluation by the student as he or she engages in the task or activity

A student's score will be generated for each of the criteria listed above and an overall *performance level* given in each subject. Results will be reported to parents, schools, and districts and included with standard test scores at the school and district levels. Scores of students attending approved private special education schools and educational collaboratives will be reported to the school or collaborative where the student took the tests and will be included in the results of the student's sending district. Reporting is by performance level only for MCAS Alternate Assessments; no scaled scores are reported.

In order to receive a performance level of *Needs Improvement* or higher, student portfolios must receive the following overall scores in each content area:

Level of Complexity – 5
Demonstration of Skills and Concepts – 3 or 4
Independence – 4

Portfolios of grade 10 students (and beyond) receiving a score of 5 in level of complexity will be evaluated by a panel of content specialists to ensure that these students have met the grade 10 standards required to earn a Competency Determination.

F. Meeting the State's Graduation Requirement Through Alternate Assessment

Students who take MCAS Alternate Assessments in grade 10 (or beyond) are eligible to earn a Competency Determination if they demonstrate the same level of knowledge and skills required of students who take the standard grade 10 MCAS tests in English language arts and mathematics. The student would be eligible to receive a high school diploma provided all other local graduation requirements are met.

Beyond grade 10, a student requiring an alternate assessment may, at the discretion of the IEP or 504 Team, annually resubmit a portfolio in either English language arts or mathematics until the student achieves a performance level of *Needs Improvement* or higher, or exits publicly-funded education. This decision should be part of the annual IEP Team meeting process and documented in the student's IEP.

V. Planning and Preparation for MCAS Testing

A. Preparing Students with Disabilities for MCAS

Since MCAS tests are based exclusively on the learning standards of the Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks*, every student with a disability must be engaged in an instructional program that

- is based on the *Curriculum Framework* learning standards
- uses varied approaches to instruction
- includes a range of opportunities that enables the student to demonstrate his or her knowledge and skills
- provides necessary and appropriate program supports and instructional accommodations to guarantee access by the student to the general curriculum.

Educators should analyze what is being taught in their schools and classrooms, and implement an instructional program that enables *all* students to acquire the content knowledge and skills outlined in the Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks*.

B. Parent's Role

Parents and guardians of students with disabilities play a critical role in preparing their child(ren) for MCAS. Some suggestions follow:

- meet regularly with your child's teacher(s) to discuss how you can support your child's education at home.
- inquire about the use of appropriate MCAS accommodations at IEP or 504 Team meetings
- review class assignments and make sure that adequate time is set aside for homework
- review MCAS test questions with your son or daughter. Released test items can be found on the Department website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testitems.html and in your public library.
- schedule an appointment to review your child's *Test Item Analysis Results* at your child's school. Identify your child's strengths and areas in need of improvement.
- ask whether the school offers an after-school and/or summer program that would benefit your child
- become familiar with the Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks*.

C. Available Resources

The following MCAS publications are available.

- *Release of Test Items (Spring 2002, 2001, 2000* and *1999)* (available for English- and Spanish-language tests)
- *Release of May 1998 Test Items* (available for English-language tests only)
- *Release of Test Items in Braille (Spring 2002, 2001, 2000* and *1999)* also available through the Vision Resources Library by calling 1-781-575-1843)
- *Release of Fall 2001 Test Items English Language Arts Grade 10 Retest*
- *Release of Fall 2001 Test Items Mathematics Grade 10 Retest*
- *Overview of the MCAS Tests (2002 and 2001)*
- *2003 Educator's Manual for the MCAS Alternate Assessment*
- *Resource Guide to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Students with Significant Disabilities*
- *Guidelines for Scoring Portfolios on MCAS Alternate Assessment*
- *Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks* in each of four content areas
  - English Language Arts
  - Mathematics
  - Science and Technology/Engineering
  - History and Social Science
- Scoring guides for all 2002, 2001, 2000 and 1999 common test items and sample student work
- *Requirements for the Participation of Students with Limited English Proficiency (Spring 2003 Update)*
- *Approved Bilingual Dictionaries for Use on the MCAS by Students with Limited English Proficiency*

With the exception of the *Release of Test Items in Braille*, these publications, along with other MCAS materials, are available on the Department's website at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas or by calling (781) 338-3625. Some of these documents are also available in local public libraries.

APPENDIX A
Advisory on Test Accommodations #17 and #26 -- Reading MCAS Tests Aloud to a Small Group of Students

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When an IEP Team or a 504 Team determines that a student with disabilities must have the test read aloud in order to participate in MCAS testing (standard accommodation #17 or non-standard accommodation #26), the test administrator may read the test items aloud to a small group of such students. **The following procedure must be followed:**

- No more than five students may be grouped together, since students typically proceed through the test at different rates.

- Students with the same **test form number** should be grouped together, since all questions in a given test form will be identical. If more than one group of students in the school will have test items read aloud, each group must use a different test form. Test form numbers appear in the upper right-hand corner of each *Student Test Booklet*.

- The assignment of students to groups based on their test form numbers should occur as close to the time of testing as possible.

- The principal or designee must personally supervise the assignment of students to groups that will have test items read aloud to them. *Student Test Booklets* may not be opened or reviewed by students prior to testing.

APPENDIX B
Acknowledgments

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